P.T. gen info
10/3 SCS

748

Sea Review | Herald-Dispatch | The Sun-Reporter | Daily Journal

People's Temple Makes Friends Across The Nation

"Caravan Of Hope" Proclaims Brotherhood

Temple 'Caravan of Hope' crosses U.S.

As the buses rolled by, one...after another...after another, in seemingly endless succession, and the people inside smiled, waved and gave the "peace sign", you realized that this wasn't any ordinary tourist group.

A few days ago, well over 700 members of the California-based Peoples Temple Christian Church, Disciples of Christ denomination, completed a strenuous three-week, 10,000 mile missionary journey that, by anyone's standards, was most unique. The project was conceived and engineered by Pastor Jim Jones, dynamic leader and founder of the "Temple", which has a remarkably well-integrated membership of several thousand, in addition to large numbers in each of many cities across the nation.

Throughout their pilgrimage, the Temple travelers bore witness to thousands of people that, in spite of the pessimism that is evidently growing in our nation, there indeed is a group that is determined to keep the American dream alive. In a stand for the survival of traditional American values of freedom, justice, and equality for all, in a context of Christian social service, Temple members follow the vision and inspiration of Pastor Jones, a former metropolitan human rights commissioner, grand jury foreman, and schoolteacher. Jones has been a tireless and outspoken advocate of civil liberties and the Bill of Rights for 25 years.

The banners proclaiming "brotherhood is our religion" on the sides of racially integrated buses brought some difficulty more than once. While fueling in the South, a truck deliberately ran into the lead bus, narrowly missing a young man who was washing the windshield. Without provocation, a group of people from the vicinity gathered and began directing racist slurs and threats at the bus caravan. Pastor Jones quickly took command of the situation, and made a firm, humane appeal for understanding. The mood of the hostile group cooled dramatically. The pastor refused to press charges against the apprehended truck driver who had struck the bus, taking into consideration the ill will that would have almost certainly been vented upon blacks living in or visiting the area afterwards. The owner of the truck stop was so moved with the kindness that Jones displayed that he pledged to pay all damages. He stated, incidentally, that he would hope to visit the church in their Redwood Valley headquarters on his vacation.

There were other incidents: several windows were broken by rocks, and gunshots were fired at the caravan. But no one was injured during the entire trip.

On the positive side, greatly outweighing these episodes, was the overwhelmingly enthusiastic, admiring, and appreciative response that the Temple convoy of buses found just about everywhere they went.

The vast Temple membership has won many friends in its mission of realizing in America the goals of racial justice and equality in the spirit of the Christian "social gospel" that sees man's basic responsibility as being his brother's keeper.

Swinging down through the Deep South and up into Canada, staying in churches, community centers, and university gymnasiums, the mammoth 18-vehicle caravan presented an amazing spectacle as it made its way from city to city. On board eleven Greyhound-type buses were some 200 senior citizens,

(Continued)

ON TOUR—Members of People's Temple Christian Church in Redwood Valley explore the nation's Capitol, above. Below, Pastor Jim Jones consults map in one of the Temple's 11 Greyhound-type buses.

some in their 80's and 90's. Visible everywhere were hundreds of children, teenagers, and young adults representing the entire spectrum of racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Wherever the caravan went, people marveled at the scope of the undertaking. Often the question was heard: "How do they manage it?" At first glance, the organizational factors (no hotels, no restaurants, so many people, etc.) appear overwhelming, if not impossible. But the answer can be found in the incredibly co-operative spirit that Pastor Jones has infused into his church.

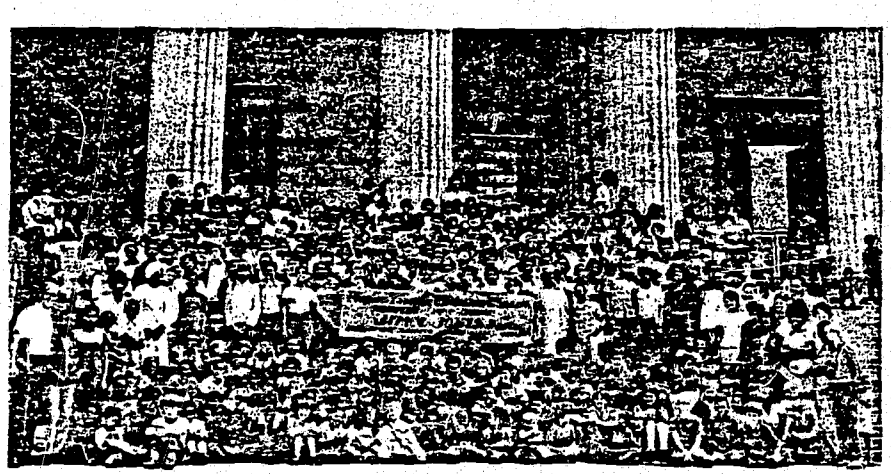
Due to careful and detailed planning, everyone on the caravan was organized and had a specific function. Bus drivers, hostesses, a nursing staff, clean-up squads, food-preparation units, and helpers of every sort worked together in highly coordinated and disciplined fashion, insuring the group comfort and security at minimal cost. One staff member noted that senior citizens without funds, as well as many of the children, were able to go free of charge. Many of these people had never traveled outside of California.

Watching this living example of human co-operation arrive at various stops along the highways of America, many were especially struck by the magnificent thoroughness with which the grounds and facilities were left free of litter. The young woman attendant at a beautiful Nebraska rest stop was visibly moved. "That entire group is neater than single families," she remarked. Everyone, including children and seniors, willingly helped out policing the grounds.

At the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry, the public relations unit was so impressed with the Temple visitors that it insisted on photographing everyone on the museum's front steps. Earlier, at the nation's Capitol, the caravan was greeted and congratulated.

Pastor Jones and many Temple members carry on a human service program that meets the needs of thousands, and which has earned the respect and praise of governmental, civic, and law enforcement agencies, especially for its outstanding record in the area of drug rehabilitation. In the Redwood Valley area, some 100 miles north of San Francisco, the Temple has established senior citizens homes, a large animal shelter which will have, until places are found for them, several homeless dogs and cats picked up by the caravan along the way), a 40-acre children's ranch and agricultural complex, as well as a community center with many fine facilities, such as an indoor heated pool.

Other human service centers in the Bay Area and Los Angeles are busy with activity. One program has sponsored over a hundred needy youngsters through college, and maintains dormitories in several locales.



People's Temple members in front of Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry during the group's late July missionary tour of the Windy City. The museum staff was so impressed by the exuberance and idealism of the group that they asked them to pose for pictures.

The Washington Post

The Welcome Tourists

The hands-down winners of anybody's tourists-of-the-year award have got to be the 660 wonderful members of the People's Temple Christian Church of Redwood Valley, Calif.—who bend over backwards to leave every place they visit more attractive than when they arrived. Like thousands of other tourists, they went calling on the U.S. Capitol the other day; but unlike others who tramp through our town spreading litter helter-skelter, this spirited group of travelers fanned out from their 13 buses and spent about an hour cleaning up the grounds.

One 82-year-old woman who was policing the area at the foot of the Capitol explained to reporter Frank Jones that the members take pleasure in sweeping across the country this way. The church, which has black, white and American Indian members, has already won friends in dozens of cities since its tour left Redwood Valley Aug. 8, and still more areas will benefit by the members' stopoffs on their return trip.

The missionary caravan of over seven hundred gave to many Americans this summer an assurance that, in the words of Pastor Jones, "there is indeed hope for our troubled nation....for in this single, spirited church there is alive the type of dedication and commitment to brotherhood and fundamental human co-operation that may well be the best solution to the problems that beset our land." His comment was echoed by the manager of a large commercial bakery in Chicago who said: "This group is demonstrating what religion should be. We would not have wars if everyone thought and lived as these people do."